

USIB-D-16.2/32
5 July 1960

UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

Validity Study on NIE 42.1-58

The Outlook for Stability in the Republic of Korea

Published 28 January 1958

Reference: USIB-M-101, item 9

A memorandum of 27 June 1960 to USIB members from the Board of National Estimates forwarded a draft validity study on NIE 42.1-58, "The Outlook for Stability in the Republic of Korea," (28 January 1958), indicating that the matter would not be placed on the agenda of a USIB meeting except at the request of a USIB member. It was also stated that unless, before close of business on 1 July, a USIB member objected or requested that the validity study be discussed at a USIB meeting, it would be considered that this paper had been "noted" by USIB as of that date. Since, prior to close of business on 1 July, no USIB member objected or requested a USIB discussion of the validity study, we now consider that the paper was "noted" by USIB as of 1 July 1960.



JOHN HEIRES
Executive Secretary

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Attachment

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1. NIE 42.1-58 was generally accurate respecting the major problems and weaknesses of Syngman Rhee's authoritarian regime, and its growing unpopularity and increasing reliance on police rule; it did not anticipate, however, how rapidly serious public unrest would build up to cause Rhee's departure.

2. The estimate was concerned principally with Rhee's position and that of his Liberal Party in the face of growing opposition prior to the 1958 National Assembly elections. The estimate pointed out that although Rhee was the dominant figure in the ROK, his personal popularity was gradually declining. It also generally anticipated the outcome of the Assembly elections, stating that even if Rhee made cautious use of police powers in the elections, "popular support for the opposition Democratic Party will certainly increase and its representation in the Assembly will expand". Much of the estimate's discussion relating to the ROK economy and the military establishment remains generally valid to date.

3. The estimate did not, however, take into account the likelihood that, if the Democratic Party scored major gains in the 1958 elections, the Rhee government's policy would revert to more vigorous application of coercion and fraud to deliver the vote in 1960. The estimate did note the existence of "popular revulsion against ubiquitous Liberal illegalities and pressure tactics during electoral periods," but did not foresee the scale and intensity of demonstrations that subsequently resulted from the strong-arm methods employed by the Rhee regime during the March 1960 election. None of the contingencies

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regarding Rhee's succession anticipated the event as it actually occurred. Given Rhee's advanced age and mental deterioration, the estimate implicitly assumed that death or disability would remove Rhee from the political scene before the gathering storm of public dissatisfaction broke.

- 2 -

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